

National Report on Hunting

Country:
Arab Republic of Egypt

2005

**BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE HUNTING OF MIGRATORY BIRDS IN
MEDITERRANEAN THIRD COUNTRIES**

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Together for birds and people



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Country:
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Methodology

This report was largely based on literature review and the author's expert knowledge. The study *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996), was a key reference used for the report with the information updated as much as possible. Interviews were also conducted with several key experts, Mr. Ali Hamdi, a national hunting management expert and Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim, the consultant to the Nature Conservation Sector (NCS) on matters concerning hunting and trade in wildlife.

Migratory birds in Egypt

Egypt due to its strategic location at the intersection of two continents is situated on internationally important migration routes for birds traveling between breeding grounds in Eurasia and winter quarters in Africa. There are quite a few bottlenecks where large numbers of migrants congregate. Many migrants over winter in Egypt; Egyptian wetlands have global significance for wintering waterbirds. There are also internationally important habitats for migratory breeding birds, most notably the Red Sea Islands.. Migratory birds occur throughout the country, with significant concentrations at different seasons in South Sinai, Red Sea, the Nile Valley and the Mediterranean coast. These includes large proportions of the world population of some species as well as a number listed as globally threatened.

Most birds migrating through Egypt are from eastern populations from Eastern Europe, Russia, Turkey and the Levant. However, some migrating birds are from Western European populations as far west as England. A few birds migrate west through Egypt wintering in Chad; however the majority of birds migrate south wintering in Sudan, East Africa and southern Africa. Some species use different routes on their return journeys and migrate through the Arabian Peninsula. Migratory breeding birds nest in Egypt during the summer and winter further south in Africa.

Overview of bird hunting in Egypt

The hunting of migratory birds in Egypt is an ancient practice which has continued into modern times. Millions of migratory birds are captured and killed every year as they pass through and winter in Egypt. The persecution of migrants is widespread with many different types of bird hunting taking place for food, sport and income.

The main forms of hunting of migratory birds can broadly be categorized as follows:

Autumn Bird Hunting

The hunting of migratory birds in the autumn is a traditional activity along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast from Rafah to Sallum and to a limited extent in the Western Desert Oases. The hunting season coincides with autumn bird migration from mid August to the end of October. Migrants are caught for recreation, commercial sale and for subsistence.

The precise numbers are not known but is thought that millions of migrants are netted, trapped and shot every year along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. All species of migratory birds, both game and non-game species are hunted; with Quail *Corturnix corturnix* and songbirds among the leading quarries. It is estimated that a quarter of a million Quail are trapped in Egypt every year. All species passerines and near passerines are caught, with warblers comprising the majority. Other birds include Corncrakes *Crex Crex*, nightjars, shrikes, kingfishers, hoopoes, doves, wheatears, pipits, larks, flycatchers, red starts, orioles and buntings. While the numbers vary year to year, over time the numbers of birds caught has decreased (per. comm. bird hunters and sellers). These declines are thought due to decreases in bird populations and changes in habitats along the Egyptian Mediterranean coast as a result of coastal development.

There is a wide variety of hunting tools and techniques employed for autumn bird catching that vary in use according to geographic region. The main methods are summarized in **Figure 1**:

Figure 1: Common Techniques and Methods to Catch Migratory Birds in Autumn

Trammel Nets

Trammel or mist nets are strung along the coast, in some areas wall to wall nets line the shore creating a formable trap for migrating birds. Birds are usually netted early morning after flying non-stop across the Mediterranean Sea. This is one of the main techniques employed to trap quail, however, the nets are indiscriminate catching all species of bird. While there are laws on the books specifying the size of the space in-between and the height of the nets, these are not enforced. Usually there are no or very small gaps in-between the nets. In the past the nets were rolled up during the day, now they are left up all the time.

Munsaab

This is a bird trap composed of grass or sticks and arranged in a tent-like structure with the entrance facing south and a piece of fishing net closing off the seaward opening. Tens of dozens of these traps are placed along lateral beaches and sand dunes. Ground dwelling and roost birds like Quail and Corncrake seeking shelter enter the traps and are caught in the interior nets.

Eb Nets

Large mist nets are placed over trees or scrubs and are used to catch perching birds such as songbirds. In areas devoid of vegetation, artificial

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vegetation has been used to attract birds. These nets are highly effective and indiscriminate catching almost every bird that seeks shelter in the vegetation

Toraha Nets

Quail and other medium size birds resting on the ground are caught in hand held nets that are thrown over the birds.

Lime

Lime is an uncommon, localized method, but highly effective to catch songbirds and other perching birds. Lime is produced from the seeds of a special plant grown for this purpose. The sticky substance is then spread on twigs, which are attached to bundles of date palm leaves. The birds become stuck when they perch on the twigs. These bundles are placed in strategic locations; for example, dozens of lime sticks were being used on an area of mudflats near Ras El Bahr (Baha El Din 1994).

Air Rifles and Shot Guns

There is an ever increasing use of air rifles for bird hunting along the Mediterranean coast. Children and young men are the main persons who use air rifles and shoot migrants for sport and recreation. Perching birds are mostly hunted, but any bird is a potential target. Small numbers of sports hunters and other hunters hunt with shot guns along the Mediterranean coast in the autumn. Shot guns are mainly used for game birds such as for hunting migratory quail, doves and waterbirds.

Autumn bird hunting is a very inhuman practice. Birds spend long hours alive in traps and some dying from injuries sustained. Many birds escape, but are injured in the process. Migrants have their flight feathers torn from their wings after being taken from a net. Shrikes have the tips of their beaks broken off. Some of these birds are discarded after being maimed or injured. Birds for sale are usually kept alive and transported and housed in cramped, crowded conditions. Songbirds are often tied into bundles by their feet.

The hunting of migrants varies according to region, which can be broken down into three main geographic regions:

North Sinai

The North Sinai coast is an area of 200 km from the boarder with Gaza to the Suez Canal. Quail is the main quarry hunted in North Sinai, although songbirds and other bird species are caught. It was estimated that almost 200,000 Quail along with upwards of 40,000 song birds were caught in this region (Baha El Din 1993).

Baha El Din (1993) estimated that 500 families participated in autumn bird catching in North Sinai. A wide cross section of the populations hunts, including Bedouins, fisherman and city dwellers. The hunters camp in huts along the beaches. While some Bedouins and fisherman still hunt for subsistence, most of the hunters catch birds for recreational purposes or to

earn extra income. Quail hunters consume a considerable part of their catch and eat songbirds and other migrants as a source of food while staying in the field. One of the peculiarities of bird hunting in North Sinai is that hunting is used as a means to maintain traditional land claims along the coast.

Trammel nets are the main method used to caught quail. Nearly the entire coast of North Sinai is netted forming an almost continuous wall of nets along the coastline. In some areas there are two layers of nets, for example, at Lake Bardawil, there is a row of nets on the coastal sand bar and another on the southern side of the lake or the islands.

The Bedouins also use Torahas, handhold nets to catch quail and other medium ground dwelling or roosting species like Corncrake.

The use of air rifles in this region is increasing mainly found near larger settlements, particularly in the east. Shot guns are uncommon.

Quail and other migrants are sold in local markets. Middle men go around daily to collect birds from the hunters, which are then sold to local retailers. El Arish, the capital of North Sinai is the leading center for the sale of quail and other migrants. Some birds are sold along the roadsides.

North Sinai is the only region along the Mediterranean coast where there is some regulation of autumn bird hunting. The Governorate sets the dates when the nets can be erected and locations where hunting is prohibited. The Coast Guard issues permits to hunters.

The Nile Delta

Autumn bird hunting also takes place along the Nile Delta Mediterranean coast from Port Said to Alexandria (250 km). Hunting in this region is similar to that in the coastal deserts to the east and west of the Delta. Quail as well as songbirds are hunted. It is estimated that 45,000 migrants are caught annually in the Delta (Baha El Din 1993).

There is little information about the numbers of hunters hunting in the autumn in the Delta, but it is probably less than in the other regions. Hunters include fisherman, herders and farmers, many of which are decedents of desert communities. While a few hunt for subsistence, most hunters seem to engage in hunting for recreational purposes or to earn supplementary income. Some hunters hunt full-time during the season: Near Ras El Bahr it was estimated that upwards of 70 hunters were maintaining lime traps on a commercial basis (Baha El Din 2004).

Trammel nets are used largely east of Rosetta branch of the Nile and have a patchy distribution. In a number of locations a continuous line of nets stretches for kilometers along the coast. Some nets are placed further inland inside the Delta lakes. Trammel net users need permits from the Coast Guards to access to the coast during the hunting season (Baha El Din 1993).

Munsaab nets are employed west of Baltim in the salt marshes and dunes along the coastal littoral, but seem to be relatively uncommon.

Lime use is restricted to use in the Delta. It appears to be localized, but was considered one of the most effective techniques to catch birds in this region (Baha El Din 1993).

Toraha Nets are also used in this area to catch large ground roosting birds.

Air rifles and shot guns are not in wide use in this region for autumn bird hunting.

Migrants caught are sold in markets in Port Said, Damietta, Rosetta and Alexandria, with minor dealers else where (Baha El Din 1993). Quail are popular and birds caught in North Coast and North Sinai supplement local caught birds. There are a number of restaurants severing Quail, some open for the season. Songbirds are in high demand near Alexandria where they are sold as "Fagafiga" both fresh and frozen to local bars and restaurants who offer birds as inexpensive snacks (Baha El Din 1993).

The North Coast

Autumn bird hunting is prevalent on the North Coast, the Mediterranean coastal plain of the Western Desert extending west of Alexandria to the border with Libya (600 km). Quail hunting primarily takes place in the east near Alexandria. Songbird hunting is widespread throughout the region. It is estimated that several million migrants are caught in this region alone.

It is estimated that at least 10,000 individuals or 10% of the population of the North Coast engages in bird hunting (Baha El Din 1993). Most hunters are from the local Bedouins communities residing along the coast.

Munsaab traps are used to catch quail and thousands of these traps can be found in the salt marshes and dunes along the coastal littoral mainly in the east (Goodman and Meininger 1989).

The use of Eb is a hunting method peculiar to this region. Nets draped over trees and shrubs are widespread along the North Coast. These nets are found inland often near homes and are maintained by the owners of the property.

The use of air rifles was increasing in the early 90's and was considered the most damaging bird catching technique in the North Coast region (Baha El Din 1993). Most interviewed stated that there is at least one air rifle in each house hold (Baha El Din 1993). Air rifles are mostly used by small groups of youth often in conjunction with Eb nets.

Bird are sold all the roadside between Matruh and Alexandria, with the majority sold in markets in Alexandria (Baha El Din 1993).

It is assumed that hunting on the North Coast has declined over the years a result of coastal development. The nearly wall to wall tourism development along the North Coast has transformed this coastline reducing or restricting access to habitats previously utilized by the hunters for hunting. In addition, the hotel gardens, land reclamation and other newly formed habitats have dispersed migrants over a larger area and provided more shelter for migrants to rest and hide.

Western Desert Oases

Migratory bird hunting is a traditional in the Western Desert Oases, such as Siwa and Bahariya. Songbirds are mostly hunted using traditional handmade hunting traps. There is little documentation about the present status of this practice, but is likely to be occurring on a small scale.

Falcon Catching

Falcon trapping takes place in the autumn mainly later in the season from mid September to early November. The coastal deserts of North Sinai and the Eastern Desert are two prime locations, but falcon trapping is found in deserts throughout the country, including remote parts of the Western Desert.

In the past twenty years there has been a significant increase in the numbers of individuals trapping falcons in Egypt. Thousands of hunters are believed to be engaging in this practice. Baha El Din and Salama (1991) estimated that 4000 falcons catchers active in North Sinai While many falcon trappers are Bedouins, hunters come from all walks of life, among them city dwellers who take a temporary leave of absence from their jobs to hunt falcons. Many falcon hunters originate from the Sharqiya Governorate which is the centre for the falcon trade in Egypt. A number of different techniques are employed to catch falcons (see Figure 2). While some individuals set-up traps near their homes, many hunters make special trips to hunt camping weeks or months in the desert.

The main target species are Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* and Saker *Falco cherrug* which are sold for thousands of dollars for falconry in Arabian Peninsula countries. Birds fetch upwards of US\$5,000 to 10,000 which is a fortune to the average Egyptian and lures them to try their luck at catching a falcon. It is not known how many of the high valued falcons are caught in Egypt annually, but is probably relatively small in the range of tens to hundreds of birds.

The most destructive aspect of falcon trapping is the impacts on the non-target species. There are no precise estimates, but it is thought that thousands to tens of thousands of falcons and other birds of prey, all legally protected are caught and sold in Egypt every year.. Baha El Din and Salama (1990) estimated the number of birds of prey caught in North Sinai ranging from 3600 to over 7000, recording 680 raptors for sale at the market in El

Arish. Particularly damaging is the catching of Lanner *Falco biarmicus*, Barbary Falcons *Falco pelegrinoides* and Kestrels *Falco tinnunculu* which are trapped live to be used as decoys to catch the higher value species. Resident populations of Lanners and Barbary Falcon have been decimated as a result.

Figure 2: Common Techniques to Catch Falcons

Noose harnessed pigeons

This is the most widespread method used in Egypt for catching falcons (Baha El Din and Salama 1990). Pigeons are staked out in the desert wearing a rope harness (Sharak). When a bird of prey tries to catch the pigeon, its talons are caught in the rope loops.

Noose baited falcons

A trap made from bird feathers and string loops is secured to the legs of a decoy falcon to simulate prey (Baha El Din and Salama 1990). The decoy is tied by a string either attached to the ground or held by the hunter. When a bird of prey passes overhead, the decoy falcon is made to take to flight in the hope the other bird will parasitize on the decoy becoming entangled in the rope loops.

The Kafaya

This is a relative new method to catch falcons that has become common in North Sinai (Baha El Din 1990). The trap consists of live bait staked to the ground and net which is tied to a string held by a hunter hiding close by in a hide. When a bird of prey comes down to take the prey, the hunter releases the string activating the net which closes upon the bird. Live bait is used and includes pigeons, Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur*, larks and rodents.

Birds of prey caught are inhumanly treated, most dying in captivity. The decoy falcons are blinded by having their eyes sown up. Birds staked out in the desert spend long hours in the hot sun. Few of the hunters know how to care for birds of prey. In the past falcons would be released at the end of the season, but these days due to the high price most falcons are kept.

There has been a few attempts to regulate falcon trapping in Egypt, mostly in Protected Areas. Law enforcement has mainly taking the form of confiscating decoy pigeons and falcons. The decoy falcons usually require rehabilitation after being in held in captivity. There is no protocol for what to do with confiscated birds. In addition, there are no facilities having capacity to keep and treat wild birds. While there is interest by the authorities to release birds back into the wild and occasionally this happens, usually confiscated birds are given to zoos and end up in the general collections.

High value falcon species caught are brought to middle men who sell the birds to Arab falconers. There are several families in the Sharqiya Governorate that specialize in training and trading in falcons. While the export trade in falcons is illegal, the middle men and falconers find ways to avoid customs regulations. Every so often illegal shipments are confiscated by the

government, but it is not known what happens to the falcons after this and some might be resold.

Waterbird Hunting

The hunting of migratory waterbirds is traditional activity taking place in the lakes along the Delta Mediterranean coast. This includes lakes: Manzalla, Burullus, Idku and Maryut. Winter is the peak season of waterbird hunting when large numbers of waterbirds over winter in Egyptian wetlands, but also occurs during the spring and autumn migrations when waterbirds pass through the country (Baha El Din 2004). While ducks are the most desired quarries, all species of waterbirds are caught including non-game species, including grebes, cormorants, waders, rails, herons, pelicans, gulls and terns. The majority are migratory birds, but residents are also caught. A variety of techniques are employed to hunt waterbirds with birds being caught both dead and alive (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Common Methods to Hunt Waterbirds

Clap-nets

Clap-nets have been used to trap birds alive since ancient times, but the current status of this method is unknown and seems to be uncommon; most recent records from Lake Burullus.

Shot Guns

Studies from the 80's and 90's found shot gun use widespread for hunting waterbirds in the Delta lakes, but its present status is unknown given gun restrictions and the introduction of new hunting techniques. Hunters shoot waterbirds from a hide. Decoys are used to attract birds, including plastic bottles covered in black duck tape and sometimes dead birds, such as herons.

Trammel Nets

Trammel or mist nets are used for waterbird hunting in Lake Manzalla. While in 1989 they were used primarily to catch waders in areas of mudflats, in 2004 mist nets found in the middle of the lake. The nets were up all the time unmanned posing a hazard to all birds. In 1993 in one net there was a dead swallow and in another a half a dozen dead and dried birds along with one live gull (Baha El Din 2004). One fisherman stated that the nets were used during autumn migration then left up till the next season.

Sound and Net Trap

This is a relatively new technique introduced in the 80's at Lake Manzalla and is very effective means to catch ducks and other birds such as Coot *Fulica atra* and Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. A square enclosure of nets is erected. A tape recorder with speakers plays recordings of bird calls to lure ducks and other waterbirds to the area where they fly into and are trapped in the nets.

While some waterbird hunting is for personal consumption, many birds are sold in local markets. Port Said and Damietta¹ have the largest and most famous markets selling waterbirds in the country. Birds are often trapped alive being kept in crowded conditions in bags or crates and treated inhumanely prior to being killed. In Damietta one seller had dozens of live gulls tied together in a bundle by their feet.

It is estimated that several hundred thousand waterbirds are annually caught in Egypt (Goodman and Meininger 1999). A study in 2004 (Baha El Din 2004) found that the numbers of waterbirds being caught was declining (Baha El Din 2004). These declines are thought to reflect decreasing populations of waterbirds wintering at the lakes mostly due to deteriorating environmental conditions in the northern Delta wetlands, but excessive hunting is probably a contributing factor.

It is difficult to determine the exact numbers of persons engaged in waterbird hunting. It is thought that 1000s are potentially hunting waterbirds. Most of these are presumed to be fishermen who hunt on a periodic basis catching birds for food or extra incomes. Much smaller numbers actively hunt birds full-time; Mullie and Meininger (1993) estimated there were less than 100 (probably between 25-50) fisherman who hunt birds as a full-time occupation at Lake Manzalla during the winter. A handful of individuals sell wild birds for food, at Damietta there were at least five in the market (Baha El Din 2004). According to these individuals, there are others sellers who sell birds in outlying areas.

There is no known regulation of waterbird hunting in Egypt. Some birds are listed as globally threatened and many species are protected under Egyptian law and international agreements. In addition to hunting excessive numbers, the high disturbance caused to wintering birds is also of concern.

Egyptian and Expatriate Sport Hunters

In comparison to other countries, there are relatively few Egyptian nationals who engage in bird hunting for sport and recreation. While there is no precise figures, the number of active Egyptian sport hunters is estimated to be in the range of 1000 and 2000 individuals (Baha El Din 1996). Most tend to be more affluent individuals and are members of shooting clubs. A small number of expatriates residing in Egypt hunt usually with Egyptian shooting club members.

Migratory game birds such as ducks, doves and quail are among the main quarries of sport hunters in Egypt (see Figure 3 for more details). Most hunting is seasonal. Hunting takes place on weekends with hunters tending to

¹ Bird hunting is a serious problem in the Damietta Governorate and is unique in the fact that the hunting of birds takes place year round with resident birds are also hunted for food and sale.

frequent one or two locations. Some hunters take trips to hunt at various locations around the country.

Figure 4: Migratory Game Birds Hunted by Sport Hunters

Waterbirds

The peak of the duck season is from late December to early February. Most hunting by Egyptian sports hunters takes place at hunting lakes either owned by the Shooting Clubs or privately owned (see Section 8.6). In addition to the hunting lakes, there is some sport hunting at other wetlands, including the Nile River. Most hunting is by shotgun using lead shot. Birds are hunted from hides. Decoys are used to attract birds.

Doves

Migratory Turtle Doves are the primary quarries. In autumn dove hunting takes place in private farms along the North Coast, as well as in El Fayoum and along the fringe of the Nile Valley near Cairo (e.g. Beni Suef). In spring doves are hunted in Kom Oshim and other agricultural lands in El Fayoum.

Quail

A few sport hunters hunt quail during migration with shot gun.

A license is required to purchase a gun or cartridges from the Ministry of Interior. The person applying must be a member of a hunting club. In recent years due to security concerns, it has become more difficult to obtain a license from the Ministry to purchase guns and ammunition; hence limiting guns use for hunting (per comm.. Ali Hamdy).

As there is no monitoring or regulation of sport hunting, it is not known how many birds are hunted or the species. It is assumed that illegal hunting is widespread and excessive numbers of birds and non-game species are hunted.

Sport Hunting for Tourism

There is small industry in Egypt for sport hunting tourism. The numbers of visitors coming to Egypt for hunting has grown in recent years; in 2000 there were 991 foreign hunting tourists officially recorded. The majority of foreign hunters are from European countries, in particular from Italy, Malta, Cyprus and Greece. Lebanese hunters have been starting to come, as well as small numbers of Arab hunters from the Gulf States e.g. Kuwait.

Migratory birds are primarily hunted, with most coming to hunt waterbirds. The numbers of birds hunted for tourism in Egypt is unknown; but possibly tens of thousands of birds are annually killed or injured. While the majorities are ducks and other waterbirds, many other species are also hunted. Among

them are migratory birds considered to be globally threatened. In addition to migrants, resident birds are hunted and the populations in some areas have been decimated and visibly declined.

A relatively small number of local tourist companies organize hunting tours in Egypt. There are also some hunting guides and boatmen who organize excursions for hunting. Tours are sometimes organized through foreign tour companies. While it is significant source of revenue for some, few rely on hunting tourism as the mainstay of their businesses or livelihood.

Most foreign hunters come in small parties or groups on hunting trips lasting between one to two weeks. Tours are organized on an all inclusive basis, sometimes including gun rental. The majority of hunters bring their own guns and ammunition and occasionally hunting dogs. Local guides accompany the hunters and small numbers of locals are employed to help carry guns and decoys and collect birds.

The main locations for tourism hunting are the following:

El Fayoum

El Fayoum Governorate is one of the top destinations for winter waterbird hunting and there are special lakes maintained for this purpose. Hunting tourists to El Fayoum usually stay upwards of a week and combine hunting with sightseeing; sometimes their wives and other family members accompany them.

Lake Nasser

Since the mid 90's Lake Nasser has become a popular location for hunting tourism. Hunters stay aboard boats traveling between Aswan and Abu Simbel and hunt birds from zodiacs.

Other Locations

Sharqiya and Beni Suef are two other Governorates known to be frequented by foreign hunters and have hunting lakes maintained for this purpose.

The National Bird Hunting Committee devised and implemented a system to control bird hunting by tourists. Tourist companies must receive approval from the Environment Office of the Ministry of Tourism and Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) before organizing hunting tours to Egypt. The companies submit the names of the clients on the tour to the Ministry of Tourism which provides copies to the EEAA. After receiving approval, the companies then submit applications for gun permits to the Ministry of Interior. The skins of birds shot by the hunters are brought to Veterinary Organization which checks the skins for prohibited species and issues the export permit.

There have been repeated problems with foreigners hunting birds in Egypt, mostly with Malta hunters. These individuals engage in what can best be described as “slaughter tours”. While waterbird hunting is used as a pretext, all species of bird are hunted, resident birds and migrants, game and non-game birds, virtually any bird that flies, even other wildlife. Maltese hunt for the pleasure of killing and to collect specimens for their taxidermy bird collections; some of which are sold in Malta. Birds killed in Egypt are skinned and the skins transported back to Malta to be stuffed. Any unwanted birds are given to the locals or are discharged. Many birds are injured and left dead or dying in the wild.

The report, *Seasonal Slaughter of Birds in Egypt, The Destruction of Birds By Maltese Hunters*, (International Animal Rescue 1999) provides a detailed overview of the hunting by Maltese hunters in Egypt documenting the problems and needs for addressing illegal hunting by Maltese and other tourists. The growing numbers of hunters visiting from other Mediterranean countries such as Cyprus known for indiscriminate bird hunting is a cause for alarm and could indicate that these hunters are likewise engaging in such practices in Egypt.

While there have been a number of attempts since the late 80's to control illegal hunting by foreign tourists in Egypt, mostly in El Fayoum, in recent years tourism hunting has gone unregulated. The Bird Hunting Committee responsible for regulating bird hunting, has not met for several years. Tourism companies and hunters have found ways around the regulations. They are going hunting in more remote parts of the country such as the Lake Nasser and the Nile Delta where they can hunt freely in an unrestricted manner.

Of particular concern is the hunting at Lake Nasser. Large numbers of dead birds have been found around the shores of Lake Nasser assumed to have been shot by foreign hunters. One boatman reported a group of Maltese hunters chasing and shooting a flock of flamingos from a boat for kilometers down the lake. A BBC film crew witnessed Maltese hunters hunting in 2003 and saw them transporting a recently shot White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. There are reports of carcasses of livestock being put out at Lake Nasser so that the Maltese could attract and shoot vultures. Uncontrolled hunting is potentially causing disturbance to waterbirds wintering at Lake Nasser which is now the most important wetland for wintering waterbirds in Egypt with the decline of the Delta lakes.

Bird's skins are regularly confiscated at the airport by the authorities in Malta and the hunters prosecuted. From this it is apparent that the hunters have found a way around the customs restrictions and monitoring in Egypt. There are reports that the skins are sent on other planes separately from the hunters and/or are hidden in luggage or other cargo such as food stuffs.

Illegal hunting by foreign tourists is taking place more or less with the tacit approval of the government which seems to be more interested in promoting

tourism than enforcing the regulations. This is obvious in light of the fact that the movement of tourists in Egypt is closely monitored and controlled by the authorities due to security concerns. The companies must submit tour itineraries to the Ministry of Interior and obtain permits to visit most locations for hunting. Furthermore, hunting parties or groups are accompanied by policemen(s) from the Ministry of Interior.

Hunting for Commercial Trade in Wildlife

There is a thriving commercial trade in live wildlife and wildlife products in Egypt.

Wildlife is killed and sold locally as pets, decorations, trinkets, for fur and other purposes. Migratory birds are caught and sold as part of this trade; however, the numbers are unknown, possibly in the range of thousands to tens of thousand of birds annually. Greater Flamingo and birds of prey are probably are the migratory birds most effected by the trade. Figure 5 provides information about the different kinds of trade in wildlife taking place in Egypt as it pertains to migratory birds.

Figure 5: The Main Kinds of Trade in Live Wildlife and Products in Egypt

Zoological collections

Giza Zoo and its satellite zoos e.g. Alexandria, North Sinai regularly purchase migratory birds such as Greater Flamingos and sometimes rarer species. There are a number of private zoos around the country including those at restaurants, hotels and safari parks; most having displays of migratory birds. These collections usually operate unmonitored and unregulated. In almost all animals are housed in substandard conditions and treated inhumanely. Due to the high mortality rate, these facilities are constantly having to purchase new birds to maintain their collections.

Research and scientific collections

University regularly purchase wild animals for research purposes. Migrant birds are not known to be actively traded for research at universities, although some doctoral candidates have proposed to conduct their theses on birds which involved the purchase of live or dead migratory birds. Many of these research programmes are of questionable scientific value.

There are only a few scientific collections of birds in Egypt, most are old. These are owned by museums, government organizations, universities and some private individuals. Most contain migratory birds. Probably the numbers of birds being caught and sold for this purpose is quite limited.

Taxidermy

Only a handful of taxidermists are known to operate in the country. Birds are stuffed for private collections and sold for decoration including both resident

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and migrant birds. Taxidermy birds can be found displayed at private homes as well as at hotels, restaurants and shops, particularly those selling spices. There formerly were a number of stores selling taxidermy birds at Kardasa, a village on the outskirts of Cairo, but stopped selling taxidermy goods after a series of government raids and confiscations. The current status of the sale of taxidermy birds at Kardasa is unknown.

Falconry

Few Egyptians engage in the hobby of falconry. Most falcons are caught and kept for the purposes of falcon trapping (see section 3.2).

Pet and International Trade

Wild animals are caught and sold for the local pet trade as well as for the international trade in wild animals. Most of the export trade in live migrant birds is for falconry and zoological collections. The majority of birds caught and sold locally for the pet trade are resident birds, but there are some migrants, particularly birds of prey. Maltese hunters have been reported to be purchasing live migratory birds of prey from the wildlife dealers at Abu Rawash, including globally threatened species which they kill and export for their bird skin collections. Wild birds are occasionally sold in pet stores and markets mostly in the larger cities around the country. In Cairo there is a popular pet market at Tunsî (formally at Sayda Aisha) where live wildlife is traded at a handful of stalls every Friday and Sunday.

The numbers of individuals and companies trading in wildlife animals is relatively small. At least 30 individuals and some 14 companies import and export wildlife in Egypt (Baha El Din *et al* 1996). The best known animal dealers are from the village of Abu Rawash in Giza, with the Toba family one of the leading dealers. While the dealers often catch wild animals themselves, they also act as middle men purchasing wildlife from local hunters at scattered locations throughout the country.

Birds caught for the wildlife trade are usually kept and treated in an inhuman fashion, many dying in captivity before being sold. Often birds die soon after being purchased since the owners know little about keeping wild birds which tend to be species difficult to maintain in captivity.

There has been some attempts to regulate the national wildlife trade in Egypt, but monitoring and regulation has tended to be sporadic, mainly taking the form of raids and confiscations of protected species after a complaint is made by the public. Despite successive raids at the Tunsî pet market, the sale of wildlife including migratory birds has continued virtually unabated.

Egypt developed a national system to regulate the international trade in wildlife after CITES threatened to suspend trade. While there have been improvements in monitoring and regulation of wildlife imports and exports, illegal shipments of wildlife have continued to be reported, including migratory

birds (see Sections 3.2 and 3.5). The extent of the illegal international trade in wildlife is unknown and warrants further investigation.

Given the repeat violations, it would seem that the government has for the most part turned a blind eye to hunting and trade for commercial sale. In fact the government has even encouraged and supported the trade as in the case of zoos which regularly purchase wild animals for their collections. No confiscations or raids have ever been made at the premises of any wildlife dealer at Abu Rawash. The dealers appear to be a wealthy and influential lobby group who have successfully resisted or avoided attempts to regulate their businesses more conservationally sound.

Bustard Hunting

Visitors and residents from oil rich countries of the Arabian Peninsula have been known to hunt bustards in Egypt; however, there is little information about the present status of this practice. There are two species of bustard hunted, Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulate* and Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii*². The former occurs in deserts west of the Nile, while the later is found in deserts east of the Nile. Resident breeding populations of both species are augmented during the winter months by migrants from neighboring countries and possibly further a field.

Hunting of *C. undulata* takes place in the coastal deserts of the Western Desert southwest and southeast of Marsa Matruh, while hunting of *C. macqueeni* occurs in the deserts of central and northeastern North Sinai, which are two of the last remaining strongholds for these species in Egypt. Most hunting takes place during the winter months when the migrants are present and the population numbers are at their peak. Hunters usually camp in the desert and are well equipped and prepared for expended desert travel. They import and travel in 4 wheel vehicles; sometimes in large convoys. They often have refrigeration for freezing game. Bustards are usually caught using falcons which are brought into the country by the hunters especially for this purpose.

It is not known how many Arab hunters hunt bustards in Egypt annually, but is probably quite small in the tens of individuals. The numbers of bustards caught is likewise unknown, but there is one report of over 60 annually hunted in North Sinai. Bustard populations have declined greatly in Egypt primarily as a result of over hunting, so the number harvested represents a significant percentage of the populations. Hunters have complained about the decline of bustard populations in Egypt and there has been a corresponding decrease in the numbers of hunters visiting.

Houbara and Macqueen's Bustard³ are protected by law in Egypt. While there have been some attempts to control bustard hunting, most of the

² The Houbara populations has been recently split into two species and is acknowledged as such by this report.

hunters are from royal families and/or are high ranking government officials complicating attempts to control their activities. Egyptian government officials⁴ have been known to grant permission to the hunters and facilitate their hunting in Egypt. Hunters are often accompanied on hunting trips by representatives of various national and local authorities, such as the military. This problem has received national media attention on a number of occasions and been the focus of public concern.

For more information about bustard hunting and recommendations see the BirdLife International Species Action Plan for Houbara prepared by the African Bird Club Partnership.

Stork Hunting

The hunting of migrating storks is reported from Egypt although there is relatively little information about this practice (Goodman and Meininger 1989). Based on study conducted in 2001 (Baha El Din and Baha El Din 2001), this traditional activity still takes place in the autumn in the Upper Nile Valley from Qena south. "Arabs" (Bedouins) settled in the Nile Valley are the primary persons who engage in this activity and hunt storks for food. Probably both White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* are hunted, but most likely more of the former as the region is a major bottleneck for White Storks. Hunting is primarily by shotgun⁵, but exhausted or sick birds are also caught by hand. The magnitude of the problem requires further assessment, but seems to be relatively uncommon, probably several hundred to thousand birds are harvested every year.

Birds Killed As Pests

Migratory birds are amongst those targeted and killed as pests to agriculture, fisheries and fish farming. Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* is one of the most notorious migratory bird pests to fisheries. Migrant thrushes and orioles are among the migrants killed as pests at orchards. Often birds are mistakenly thought to be pests and killed.

Not much is known about bird pest control in Egypt and the numbers of migratory birds killed every year is unknown. Pest control falls under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture Pest Control and Fisheries Departments, but is often undertaken on an ad hoc basis by farmers, fish farmers and fishermen. Indiscriminate methods are often employed to kill birds and other wild animals perceived as pests, such as poisoning and indiscriminate shooting or trapping.

⁴ High ranking government officials have been among those singled out for granting permits to Arab hunters.

⁵ The number persons owning shotguns is limited in Upper Egypt, mostly confined to security guards.

Catching and Collecting Eggs of Seabirds

Migratory seabirds nesting on islands in the Red Sea are known to be caught and their eggs collected by fisherman for food. The status of this practice is unknown, but seems to be uncommon.

Use of lead shot

Lead shot is the main ammunition utilized by sport hunters for duck hunting in Egypt and is probably used as well for waterbird hunting. There is no information available about the quantities of lead shot entering the environment in Egypt or the number of cartridges sold annually. It is difficult to gauge the magnitude of the problem, but is probably less than in other countries given the numbers of hunters involved; however, further study is warranted.

The government does not seem to be aware of the problems associated with lead shot and does not monitor or restrict its use in Egypt. Furthermore, there is little awareness of this problem among hunters themselves (per comm.. Ali Hamdi). The lack of alternatives to lead shot in Egypt and the low cost of lead shot and guns using shot are two key factors contributing to its continued use.

Species of migratory bird of concern hunted in Egypt

Migratory birds considered globally threatened protected under the appendixes of international agreements are commonly hunted and trapped in Egypt. This includes species listed under the IUCN Red Data List, CITES, AEWA, CMS and the European Union Birds Directive of the Bern Convention⁶. Several of these species are still in need of formal protection under Egyptian law, while many others are listed on paper as a protected species, but there is no formal protection.

It is difficult to determine the impacts of hunting on migratory birds since they cross many boundaries, but it is thought that the populations might be adversely affected. Bustards are known to be declining as a direct result of over hunting. It is estimated that more than 9000 *Corncrakes* are annually killed in Egypt during autumn migration (Baha El Din *et al* 1996b). Wintering populations of Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca* are probably subjected to hunting pressure. Endangered birds of prey, such as Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* are known to be trapped and sold in Egypt.

⁶ Egypt is not a contracting party to the Bern Convention.

Socio-economic impacts of hunting migratory birds

Cultural

Birds have held an important place in Egyptian culture since ancient times. Gods in Ancient Egyptian mythology were portrayed as birds, the most famous, Horus, the Falcon God. A bird of prey is represented on the Egyptian Flag and the Eye of Horus is used as a symbol for the national airline carrier.

There is a long tradition of bird hunting in Egypt. The hunting of birds was important source of food in Ancient Egyptian times as well as was a popular sport. Autumn bird catching provided a vital source of protein for desert communities. Even the Bible mentions Quail hunting in the Sinai as “mana from heaven”. At the beginning of the last century Quail hunting was a profitable business, between 1906 and 1913 one to two million Quail were exported from Egypt to European markets.

While some subsistence hunting still takes place, for most bird hunting is no longer a necessity. Birds are hunted today more for sport and recreation and as a means to earn extra income. Still, hunting remains a deeply entrenched traditional activity in a number of Egyptian communities and thus is very difficult to stop or change. Hunting is a male pursuit, there are few women hunters. Boys learn to hunt birds at a very young age. Parents encourage children to hunt by giving those air rifles and many go hunting with their fathers.

Egyptians tend to have a very exploitive and consumptive view toward nature. There is also little regards in Egypt for the humane treatment of animals. Birds in particular are viewed as a resource to be used by man and hunted, consumed, stuffed and caged. Although disappearing, traditional conservation systems still exist among some Bedouin communities, but there are no known restrictions applied to migratory bird hunting⁷. While are Islamic prescriptions about hunting and the humane treatment of animals, these are not widely known and followed.

While interest in and awareness of nature has been growing, the conservation ethic is relatively new to Egypt and found in limited circles, mostly individuals who are better educated and affluent. There are few Egyptian nature conservation advocates. Furthermore, there are only a small number of Egyptian nationals interested in and watch birds as a hobby. Bird keeping is a much more common and accepted practice.

Unlike in many other countries, where conservation has been embraced by hunters as a means to preserve their sport, there are relatively few Egyptian hunters who are conservation oriented. Hunters in Egypt tend to oppose any restriction that prevents or limits their hunting. Although small in number, the hunters represent a strong lobbying force. Many of the individuals and

⁷ It should be noted that along the North Sinai and Western Desert coast resident birds are not usually hunted in the autumn and which means that some sort of special status is afforded to resident birds.

companies involved have wealth and connections and make use of their influence.

Economic

There are no figures available, but bird hunting in Egypt probably contributes little to the nation's economy. Even the benefit to local economies is negligible. Still, for some businesses and individuals, migratory bird hunting represents an important source of revenue and livelihood. The profit motive is one of the key incentives behind the continuation of bird hunting in Egypt.

Bird Hunters

Hunting and trapping of migratory birds is a source of employment and supplementary income to thousands of individuals in Egypt. While a high percentage of these are from poor, marginalized communities, relatively small numbers of individuals depend upon and earn their livelihoods exclusively from migratory bird hunting. The vast majority engage in hunting as a secondary activity to supplement their incomes. It was estimated by Baha El Din and Salama (1990) that the net profit to a quail hunter in North Sinai was between 1,050 and 750 which is considerable in comparison to the average income in Egypt. Falcon trapping is the most lucrative form of migratory bird hunting, but only a few individuals per season succeed at catching the high priced falcons (see section).

In some of the poorer desert and fishing communities hunt migratory birds as a free source of meat to supplement their diets. Fishermen at Damietta mentioned the high cost of purchasing meat which they said they could only afford to consume once a week (Baha El Din 2004).

The subsistence costs for bird hunters in Egypt seems to be quite low. One of the highest cost is land rental; some people rent out their land to others for bird catching for LE150-450 per season (Baha El Din Salama 1990).

Wholesalers and Retailers

Wholesalers and retailers are among those who profit the most from bird hunting in Egypt. Relatively small numbers of the individuals and businesses in Egypt engage in trade related to migratory birds, including:

- Middle man who collect birds from bird hunters and sell to retailers;
- Stores, stalls and sellers selling wild birds as a food stuffs;
- Restaurants that sell wild birds on the menu.
- Bird dealers who trade locally and internationally in wild birds for collections and pets, such as the animal traders at Abu Rawash;
- Falcon traders, such as in Sharqiya;
- Stores or stalls selling birds as pets or taxidermy for decoration;
- Taxidermists.

The amount of money received from the sale of migratory birds seems to be variable with falcons fetching thousands of dollars to songbirds being sold for a few pilasters⁸. Birds of prey fetch the most money; for example, an Imperial Eagle purchased at Abu Rawash in 2003 was sold for LE1000 which was claimed to be the selling price to Maltese hunters (per comm.. Tom Coles). In 1993 Quail sold for a few pounds, while the price of songbirds varied according to size; warblers sold for LE .12, while shrikes for LE.5 and orioles for .75 (Baha El Din 1993). At the Damietta Bird Market in 1992 LE100 was the asking price for four wild ducks which is relatively high by Egyptian standards (Baha El Din 1994). While ducks and quails are considered a luxury good, it would seem that the other non-game birds are purchased as an inexpensive food item by poorer communities or by certain segments of society having this acquired taste.

Sport Hunting

There are no studies of the economic benefit from sport hunting, but it is probably fairly limited. Only a relatively small numbers of Egyptians can afford to engage in this hobby. Correspondingly, only a few companies depend on sport hunting for their businesses; one is sporting goods stores catering to hunters. The hunting reserves also depend almost exclusively on the sports hunters. Most shooting clubs today have a diverse general membership with hunting no longer the primary focus of these clubs.

Tourism Hunting

Hunting for tourism generates some of the most revenue from bird hunting and has a “trickle down” effect with many beneficiaries. The numbers of visitors coming to Egypt to hunt has steadily grown and according to official figures, there were 991 foreign hunting tourists in 2004 (Ministry of Tourism per comm.). There are relatively small numbers of companies organizing hunting tours, most working in the tourism field in general. While most do not rely exclusively on tourism hunting, for many businesses and individuals, hunting tourism provides a significant source of employment and revenue.

Tour companies or independent operators organizing hunting tours are among those that profit the most from bird hunting tourism. Few individuals are directly employed in services specifically related to bird hunting, such as hunting guides and Sharkaris. Most goods and services are of a more general nature associated with tourism, such as drivers, boat men, tour guides, porters, waiters, airlines, car hire, boat hire, hotels, restaurants, sale of tourist souvenirs, etc..... Local community benefit from hunting tourism is fairly limited⁹. Local people, such as farmers work as Sharkaris carrying guns, cartridges decoys, etc.. and collect birds for the hunters working only during

⁸ As of 23/7/2005, the exchange rate was LE1.00 was equal to US 00.17

⁹ The exception are guides and others who accompany Arab hunters, who tend to be better paid and have been known to receive gifts for their services.

the hunting season on an opportunistic basis earning between LE50-100 per day.

The exact amount is unknown, but probably several million LE is annually generated from hunting tourism. Yet, the contribution of bird hunting tourism to the GNP is a minute in comparison to the tourism industry as a whole; for example, in 2004 there were upwards of 1000 hunting tourists as compared to 8.1 million foreign visitors to the country during the same period which according to the Central Bank generated over 6 billion dollars (Ministry of Tourism Press Release 2005). However, hunting tourism is important to some local communities, such as the El Fayoum Governorate, which do not receive as many foreign tourists or benefit from tourism as much as other parts of the nation.

Trade and Manufacture of Hunting Equipment

There is no or little information about the trade and manufacture of hunting equipment in Egypt. Most of the guns and other sport hunting equipment sold in Egypt is imported from abroad. There is one gun manufacture in Egypt in Maadi, Cairo, but mainly produces guns for security purposes. Most of the ammunition is manufactured in Egypt, it is estimated that less than 5% is imported (per. comm.. Ali Hamdi), mostly purchased by more affluent Egyptian sport hunters. There is a factory in Alexandria which manufactures lead shot and cartridges.

A relatively small number of stores around the country sell guns and rifles for sport hunting. These tend to be specialty stores catering to sport hunting and are found in Cairo and several of the other large cities and settlements around the country. The high cost of guns and ammunition as well as gun licensing has limited their use in Egypt as a hunting tool. Air rifles use though has been increasing and are more prevalent in stores as there are no restrictions on their sale and they are less expensive in price.

Bird hunters make most of their own hunting tools. The material for the trammel nets is imported and sold locally in hardware stores. There is are some locally manufactured traps and other tools produced, such as lime sticks, sold at various locations around the country, mostly along the Mediterranean coast.

Government

While revenue is being reaped by the private sector from hunting and trapping (mostly illegal), wildlife in Egypt is being undervalued. Wildlife and other natural resources are treated for the most part as a free resource. There is little in the way of user fees charged by the government to catch and trade in wildlife, such as through hunting licenses. There is no comparative economic analysis of the different forms of wildlife utilization in Egypt, such as comparing whether more would gained from a species as an ecotourism attraction or biological control than from hunting.

In addition from collecting money directly from charges related to hunting, the government generates income from migratory bird hunting in the form of collecting taxes on imported goods, income taxes from registered businesses and tourism taxes from foreign hunters. The government also profits from hunting through the rental of land as hunting reserves. However, most income generated from migratory bird hunting probably goes untaxed since vast majority of bird hunters and sellers do not pay income tax. (also see Section 8.5)

The government policy seems to be to support any activity that generates jobs or revenue for the country. It also seems likely that “financial incentives” have also been used to encourage officials to overlook violations and allow illegal hunting and trade.

Wildlife conservation in Egypt

Overview

Egypt has taken steps to protect its wildlife populations and important habitats. Laws have been passed, organizations established and programmes developed to protect nature. The establishment of the Protected Areas has been the most significant action taken to date. Still, much needs to be done to protect Egypt’s unique natural heritage. Egypt has limited national capacity in wildlife management and does not have the necessary laws, organizations, programmes and other means protect the country’s valuable wildlife resources.

Nature conservation has traditionally received low priority in Egypt in light of more pressing social, economic, political and environmental concerns. There has been more emphasis in Egypt on habitat conservation than on species protection. Even by the conservation community itself, wildlife management, including migratory bird conservation and hunting management has tended to be downplayed or neglected as an issue.

Habitat destruction is the most serious threats to wildlife in Egypt. Much of the changes and declines in wildlife populations are a direct result of loss of habitat such as from land reclamation, pollution, hazarded development and human disturbance. Egyptian wetlands have been particularly impacted.

Over hunting and other forms of unsustainable use of wildlife are directly responsible for the declines in a number of wildlife populations, particularly resident species. While the Protected Areas have helped to conserve wildlife found within their boundaries, there is little protection afforded to wildlife populations outside the Protected Areas, largely due to inadequate systems and measures to protect wildlife at large.

International Conventions

Since 1936 Egypt has signed over ten international and regional conventions concerning the preservation of nature; nearly all of which have provisions for the conservation and sustainable use of wildlife resources, including migratory birds. According to Article Number 151 in the Egyptian Constitution, any international convention to which Egypt is a party, becomes the law of the land in Egypt and takes precedence over Egyptian law.

The main international and regional conventions which Egypt has signed, obligating member states to conserve migratory birds species and regulate their harvesting is listed on Figure 6:

Figure 6: Conventions Signed By Egypt with Provisions Concerning the Conservation and Use of Migratory Birds

- African Convention on Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers 1968)
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (RAMSAR) (1971)
- Barcelona Convention (1976)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1973)
- Red Sea Agreement (1982)
- Specially Protected Area and Biodiversity of the Mediterranean Protocol (1982)
- Migratory Species of Wild Animal (CMS) (1983)
- Biodiversity Convention (CBD) (1992)
- African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) (1995)

The Nature Conservation Sector is the focal point for all conventions related to biodiversity, except for CITES which is in joint supervision with the Ministry of Agriculture. While Egypt regularly attends meetings of the contracting parties and submits reports, except in the case of CITES, Egypt has yet to take the necessary actions to materialize the provisions of the conventions on national basis as mandated by the agreements. A national program for hunting management was included in one of the versions of the National Biodiversity Strategy to the CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), which was later changed and not included in the strategy that appears on the CBD website.

As for the status of three of the most important conventions for the conservation of migratory birds:

CITES

There has been steps in recent years to establish a legal, organizational and operation framework for CITES management in Egypt. A system has been

established for the issuing CITES permits and monitoring wildlife imports and exports at the airports and ports. While there has been enhanced regulation of CITES, including confiscations of falcons, the country has been lax in convention compliance which has led to repeat violations. There has been continued trade in species and products listed under Appendix I of the convention and excessive trade in animals listed under Appendix II. CITES listed species. Migratory birds have been found smuggled from Egypt or exported with forged documents. A number of CITES listed species are either not or only partially legally protected in Egypt. It would seem given the violations that there is a need to enhance the monitoring and regulation of CITES in Egypt. There is a question if the country has the capacity and political will to undertake such action.

CMS and AEWA

There has been little in the way of follow-up on the provisions of CMS and AEWA in Egypt. There are a number of species listed under Appendix I and II of the agreements not protected under Egyptian law (see Annex 12). All the actions taken to meet these agreement's requirements are on an incidental basis. The lack of compliance is due to the fact that government is overloaded and its limited resources and manpower strained trying to meet all the needs and demands in the field of nature conservation.

Status of hunting management in Egypt

Egypt is one of the few nations of its stature that does not have a national hunting management system. The existing policies and practices do not take into consideration the requirements of a sustainable system of organized hunting. There is no clear framework for hunting management, and the responsible authorities lack sufficient resources and capacity to develop and operate an effective system. Nearly all hunting in Egypt, including that of migratory birds takes place in an excessive, indiscriminate manner without adequate consideration to long-term sustainability contrary to the provisions of international agreements to which the country is party.

All forms of wildlife utilization in Egypt are insufficiently monitored and regulated. There are fundamental deficiencies with the existing legislation and organizations. Furthermore, serious problems remain concerning the enforcement of conservation laws and co-ordination of governmental agencies concerned with the protection of wildlife resources inside and outside the Protected Areas.

While there has some attempts since the early 90's to regulate bird hunting, these efforts fell short of addressing and solving the problems. Most actions taken concentrated on controlling the hunting by foreigners and largely neglected hunting by Egyptians. While there is realization of the problems and needs for hunting management, so far little has been done to change and improve the *status quo* so hunting is going on virtually unregulated.

There seems to be little interest or willingness to address hunting management in Egypt, especially at the senior levels. This is due to a number of factors mentioned throughout this document. Hunting management is also a complicated issue and difficult to implement. The government tends to avoid those actions which might upset local communities and special interest groups. The absence of a national or international watch dog to follow up on and lobby for this issue has also contributed. Probably the only way hunting management will be addressed in Egypt is if the country is goaded into it through international pressure or the threat of penalties, such as sanctions which has happened in the past.

Studies about Hunting Management in Egypt

A number of studies have been conducted to assess Egypt's hunting management needs. These studies addressed wildlife hunting in general, with migratory bird hunting identified as one of the most intensive forms of wildlife utilization and a priority for action. While much of the information is incomplete and outdated, there is enough available to begin the development a hunting management framework for Egypt. The need for additional studies might be identified during the course of devising a system.

The key studies undertaken to date are as follows:

- In 1993 Lorgnier du Mesnil visited Egypt on behalf of International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation and produced the document *Wildlife and Hunting Activities Management in Egypt*.
- Dandia as part of its Institutional Support for EEAA commission a *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996), which is a landmark document which thoroughly examined the issue of hunting management in Egypt. Little has changed since its publication and most the problems and needs are still valid.
- A study is currently in progress with support of Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to examine the capacity building needs for hunting management in Egypt. The document *National Actions for the Management of Hunting (Ibrahim M. et al)* is in production in Arabic and makes recommendations including proposing amendments to Law 4/1994.

Legislation and Law Enforcement

Egypt is one of the earliest civilizations where some form of hunting management is known. The Ancient Egyptians issued rules or decrees concerning hunting and the treatment of wild animals. Hunting management was known from the country in more modern times as well. The Egyptian Royalty maintained hunting reserves for duck and partridge shooting. Under British occupation there were a number of attempts to regulate hunting. The British initiated the passing of the first wildlife conservation laws in May 1912,

which made it illegal to kill certain species of birds known to be beneficial to agriculture. The government and shooting clubs also adopted measures at various times to protect threatened wildlife populations and control over hunting.

The laws are by far the most important legal instrument protecting wildlife. There are five main laws in Egypt having provisions related to the hunting of migratory birds. See Figure 7. The most important law for hunting management is Law 4/1994 for the Environment. In addition to the laws, there are other types of legal instruments governing or having provisions concerning the hunting of migratory birds, which including Ministerial Decrees, Governorate Decrees and regulations by National Committees. For more detailed information about the laws and other legal instruments see *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996).

Figure 7: The Main Laws with Provisions for Hunting Management in Egypt

Law 58/1949 On Arms and Ammunitions

Regulates gun and ammunition use in Egypt

Law No. 53/1966. The Agriculture Law

Species protection mainly birds beneficial to agriculture, but also those which are globally threatened.

Law No. 124/1983. On Catching Fish and Aquatic Life

Regulates hunting at lakes, fish farms and other inland wetlands.

Law 102/1983 For Natural Protectorates

Protects habitats important for biodiversity and prohibits hunting in these areas.

Law No. 4/1994 For the Environment

This is most significant legislation to control environmental degradation issued to date and includes provisions concerning international conventions, hunting management and species protection.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for enforcing the laws concerning hunting and wildlife protection. Other bodies must notify this organization if there are any offences. In order to make an arrest, government officials must be accompanied by a policeman. The police can then detain or arrest law offenders and confiscate the animals, weapons or equipment used in the violation. Afterward the Ministry of Justice is responsible for prosecuting the cases in a court of law.

The existing legislation is inadequate to control illegal hunting. The laws are outmoded, inadequate and have little scientific basis. The laws and decrees are often issued in an uncoordinated fashion without consulting the pertinent

national authorities or experts.. The appropriateness of certain legislation is questionable, such as Law 126/1983 which empowers the General Authority for the Development of Fish Resources (GADFR) with responsibilities for managing waterbird hunting. In most instances the legislation does not specify a system for implementation. Much of the existing laws give overlapping responsibilities for hunting management to many organizations complicating law enforcement. Furthermore, the penalties for violations of the law are too low (often based on past standards) and are insufficient to act as deterrents.

There is little awareness of the laws and understanding of their importance, even among the law enforcement agencies. Not surprising, the laws tend to be implemented periodically in an ad hoc basis usually in response to a formal complaint. Most enforcement has taken the form of confiscations of protected species. There is rarely prosecution. In fact most illegal activities continue after the violators have been caught and reprimanded by the authorities.

There has been a proposal to amend Law 4/1994 for the Environment, but to date no action has been taken (see *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996) for a detailed discussion of the law and its needs).

Organizations Involved in Hunting Management

Egypt does not have a sole central government authority responsible for hunting management. There are many organizations involved in or having responsibilities for hunting management, some without a legal basis. Under the existing situation, organizations have overlapping roles and responsibilities with insufficient co-ordination between the different bodies. In addition to lacking clear policies, directives and systems for hunting management, most organizations do not have the qualified personnel, equipment, financing and other resources necessary to manage hunting. In most instances no specific department or even personnel has been assigned to oversee hunting management. There tendency to view hunting management as a secondary issue low on the list of priorities. See the *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996) for more information.

Most of the bodies involved in hunting management are governmental organizations at the national level, but local governmental bodies are also involved, as well as non-governmental organizations, as follows:

Ministries

There are five main Ministries presently involved in hunting management in Egypt,

The Ministry of Environment

According to Law 4/1994, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), the technical arm of the Ministry of Environment responsible for environmental management, has the central role in organizing and coordinating hunting management in Egypt. Law 4/1994 gives the EEAA responsibilities for the following:

- Oversee compliance to international environmental conventions which obligate the nation to set-up a system of hunting management and wildlife resource utilization;
- Nominate species to be protected under Law 4;
- Specify the circumstances when the hunting of protected species is to be allowed;
- Investigate and approve requests to hunt protected species;
- Propose the areas where the provisions of the law shall apply;
- Co-ordinate with the relevant bodies to insure that the necessary decrees are issued.

Furthermore, the legislation further obligates the EEAA to define the requirements of a hunting license, identify the competent authorities to carry-out the provisions of the law and undertake other needed actions to facilitate the application of the law.

The Nature Conservation Sector is the department of EEAA responsible for biodiversity conservation. It is divided into two main sub departments, Protected Areas and Biodiversity. Hunting management is suppose to fall under the later. To date, the main focus have been management of the Protected Areas, which includes controlling hunting in the reserves. While it exists on paper, there is no Biodiversity Department as such and no hunting management unit has ever been formally established. A consultant is responsible for looking after hunting management issues on behalf of the NCS. Managers or rangers in the protected areas whenever the need arises usually follows-up on hunting management in their respective areas or Governorates. There are likewise no facilities, vehicles or other equipment explicitly for this purpose. While the Ministry of Environment has had some success regulating hunting, its power and authority have been limited and for the most part unable to fulfill its mandate under the law.

Ministry of Agriculture

This is the largest ministry in the country and is responsible for agriculture, land reclamation and fisheries. There are several organizations under the Ministry which have direct or indirect responsibilities for hunting management:

The Veterinary Authority

This body is responsible for veterinary affairs in Egypt. Among its responsibilities is the monitoring of all animals coming into and leaving the country. The Quarantine Department operates quarantines and has officials

at all ports, including Cairo International Airport. According to Ministry of Agricultural Decree 28/1967, the Veterinary Authority can issue licenses to hunt species protected under Law 53/1966 for scientific and touristic interests. There are a handful of staff stationed at airports and ports that follow up specifically on wildlife important-exportation.

Egyptian Wildlife Service (EWS)

This body formerly associated with the Giza Zoological Garden has ceased to exist and can be considered as defunct. All of its staff were seconded to the National CITES Management Committee or the Veterinary Authority.

General Authority for the Development of Fish Resources (GADFR)

This body is responsible for the management of fisheries in Egypt. It is also authorized by law to issue licenses for waterbird hunting and can lease wetlands for hunting. There is no known department or staff at the GADFR explicitly responsible for hunting management or facilities for this purpose.

Pest Control Department

This organization develops and implements programmes to control agricultural pests. Little is known about the department or activities and what precautions are taken if any to control pests in an ecologically sound manner. It is assumed that it operates through the Agricultural Departments and Cooperatives at the local level around the country.

Ministry of Tourism

This is the main government body responsible for tourism in Egypt. An Environment Department was established at the Ministry in 1989 to oversee environmental issues related to tourism. Hunting tourism is managed by this department. Other Ministry departments are active in the promotion and development of tourism, including hunting tourism.

Ministry of Interior

This is the main body in Egypt for national security and law enforcement and is responsible for apprehending and arresting violators of the laws. According to Law 58/1949, this body can issue permits for guns and ammunition. The Ministry of Interior is also responsible for issuing licenses for the hunting of species protected under Law 4/1994.

Water and Environment Police

This body is responsible for monitoring inland waters and enforcing the provisions of Law 4/1994 concerning those pertaining to hunting management. There is no staff, facilities or manpower explicitly for the purpose of hunting management.

Tourism Police

This department protects and monitors the activities of tourists. In spite of their direct involvement they do not seem to be enforcing species protection legislation and regulations with regards to hunting tourism.

Customs and Port Police

These police monitor the import and export of goods at the airports and ports, including live wildlife and skins.

Ministry of Defense

This ministry is responsible for the defense of the country. While it does not have specific duties for hunting management, this body is responsible for security and controlling activities in areas under their jurisdiction, such as remote desert regions and borders, like the Mediterranean coast of North Sinai. The Ministry maintains checkpoints and conducts patrols. This body has been known to give permission for migratory bird hunting, such as for bustard hunting.

National Committees

Two national committees have been formed having responsibilities for managing bird hunting and trade in wildlife. The legal and operational frameworks for implementing and follow-up on the directives of the Committees are unknown.

Bird Hunting Committee

A Game Bird Hunting Management Committee was established in 1994 by decree of the Minister of Environment chaired by Executive Chairman of the EEAA to advise the agency on bird hunting matters, mainly in relation to tourism and sport hunting. Representatives from concerned Ministries as well as national experts are represented on the Committee. While the committee was active in the past, it has not met in the past three years.

The committee is suppose to meet at the beginning of the hunting season to designate the game birds which can be hunted, as well as to set bag limits and seasons. Other measures have been taken by the committee to regulate bird hunting, such as prohibiting the use of automatic shotguns and recorded duck calls, as well as restricting the gauge of cartridges and pellets.

CITES Management Committee

A National Committee for CITES Management was formed by Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture in 2000 and includes representatives from concerned Ministries and national experts. A CITES Management Authority was established at the Ministry of Agriculture which oversees the day to day

management of the implementation of CITES. Several Scientific Committees were also set up and meet as needed. The committee seems to deal with all matters concerning international trade even those unrelated to CITES.

Local Governmental Bodies

Governors have considerable powers to regulate hunting. They can authorize the issuing of licenses, designate areas where hunting can take place and issue other regulations concerning hunting as deemed appropriate. There are Protected Area and Environmental Offices established in some of the Governorates, which are responsible for local environmental and conservation issues. These bodies at times have brought hunting problems to the attention of the Governors resulting in the issuing of Governorate Decrees. Only two Governorates, Fayoum and North Sinai are known to have implemented rudimentary systems for bird hunting management. There is a tendency for Governors to support bird hunting and opposed efforts to improve its management.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

There are several NGOs in Egypt involved in or concerned about hunting management and migratory bird conservation:

Shooting Clubs and Associations

The Shooting Clubs are the most important NGOs involved in hunting management. In Egypt there are five main Shootings Clubs and several smaller associations (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Main shooting clubs and associations in Egypt

- Shooting Club, El Dokki, Giza ¹⁰
- Remay Shooting Club, Giza (military)
- Shooting Club, El Maadi, Cairo
- Shooting Club, Heliopolis (El Shams), Cairo
- Shooting Club, Alexandria
- Hunting Hobbyist Association, Aswan
- Hunting Hobbyist Association, Wadi El Natrun
- Sons of Nubia Association for Hunting, Cairo

The largest and oldest club is the Dokki Shooting Club in Giza.

The membership of the clubs and associations is unknown. Most are not exclusively for sport hunting, but also for sport shooting or are general sporting clubs catering to a diverse membership.

¹⁰ Branch in Port Said, Rest House in Marsa Allam

The Shooting Clubs are supervised by the Supreme Council of Youth and Sports, while the associations fall under the jurisdiction the Ministry of Social Affairs. Most shooting clubs own, rent or lease hunting reserves, in particular for duck hunting (also see Section 8.6). A number of clubs issue hunting regulations and guidelines to be followed by their members. The status of hunting management at the clubs is unknown; there seems to be little interest in or awareness of nature conservation or ethical hunting.

Environmental Societies

There are thousands of environmental NGOs in Egypt, but few active in the field of biodiversity conservation. NGOs are governed by law and their activities are supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs. There has been some effort by Egyptian societies to bring attention to hunting and bird protection issues mainly taking the form of workshops and campaigns. In general environmental activism tends to be low in Egypt and few NGOs act as watch dogs.

There was an Ornithological Society of Egypt (OSE), but it has not been active in more than ten years. Since then, no local NGO has since been actively dealing with and promoting bird conservation in Egypt. Furthermore, no NGO is known at present to be addressing the topic of migratory bird hunting.

There is an Egyptian conservation society presently undergoing registration with the encouragement and support of the BirdLife African Partnership that will apply to become the BirdLife partner designate for Egypt. This society intends to develop activities and projects related to migratory bird conservation, such as species and habitat protection, hunting management ecotourism and community development.

There have been a number of international NGOs following problems with bird hunting for tourism in Egypt, but these organizations operate outside the country and have had little impact at the local level. The exception is BirdLife International, which has been active in Egypt since the 80's through its affiliate, Sherif Baha El Din and the author of this report, both who have been involved in various projects and studies on behalf of this organization, including some in relation to migratory bird conservation and hunting.

Animal Welfare Societies

Several animal welfare NGOs have become active in Egypt in recent years. While these have shown some interest in nature and hunting, they have tended to focus primarily on improving the welfare of domestic animals, particularly cats, dogs, donkeys and horses.

The Sinai Wildlife Project in South Sinai was active back in the 90's, but it ceased to be active when its president left Egypt following problems with the

authorities. It established a wildlife rehabilitation centre at a hotel in Sharm El Sheikh to treat and rehabilitate injured and sick White Storks, as well as other migratory birds. Confiscated falcons were sometimes brought to the center for treatment and release. The status of the centre is unknown, but last heard it was functioning as a general veterinary clinic.

Rules, Regulations and Guidelines for Hunting

There have been some attempts to develop regulations and guidelines for hunting management and wildlife trade in Egypt such as through the National Committees. Some of these are based on the existing laws and decrees, while others seem to have no formal basis and are created in an ad hoc basis usually response to a particular crisis. Most of the rules, regulations and guidelines are outmoded, inadequate and have no scientific basis. Furthermore, they are not regularly reviewed and updated. According to the consultant responsible for hunting management at the EEAA, he issues the regulations concerning hunting, but it is unclear what he bases these directives or how they are formulated. There seems to be no legal or operational frameworks for enforcement and monitoring of the hunting rules, regulations and guidelines and thus, are seldom implemented or followed. See the *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996) for more detailed information.

The status of rules and regulations to control hunting are discussed below:

Species

While there is currently a list of protected species, this list needs to be revised and amended to the Executive Regulations of Law 4/1994. Species listed under international conventions not protected by law in Egypt should be included. A permissible game bird list has been created for bird hunting for tourism, but has not been recently updated. There is no monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that lists are being followed, in large part since few in Egypt are able to identify birds.

Hunting Seasons

Official hunting seasons presently exist in Egypt for bird hunting by tourists and quail hunting in North Sinai. Some Egyptian shooting clubs set seasons, days and times for hunting in areas under their supervision. Most of the seasons are not set according to systematic, scientifically sound criteria.

Bag Limits

In Egypt bag limits have only been set for bird hunting by tourists and these for the most part have no scientific basis and are seldom enforced. There is no information being collected about the numbers and species of birds being

harvested in Egypt. Furthermore, there are no surveys being undertaken to estimate game populations.

Hunting Methods

There are some regulations of nets, traps and the types of guns and ammunition, as well as modes of transportation that can be utilized for hunting. Again the regulations and rules do not seem to be applied.

Hunting Licensing

At present there is no formal system for the issuing of hunting licenses in Egypt. Licenses for hunting can be issued by many bodies. There are serious gaps in the present system with many types of hunting not licensed. In addition, there are no licenses required for trade in and possession of wildlife in Egypt. Except in a few instances, there are no procedures for issuing a license. Most licenses do not stipulate the rules and regulations expected of the license holder. Since there is no central co-coordinating body overseeing the granting of hunting licenses or compiling such data, it is not known how many licenses are issued per year or for what purpose. The fees for the licenses are generally low and the funds are not recycled back into the management of the system (see below).

Revenue Generating Mechanisms Related to Hunting Management

Economic sustainability is not a feature of hunting management in Egypt although similar to the Protected Areas, there is high potential to charge fees from wildlife hunting and trade that would more than cover the cost of maintaining the system. At the present time in Egypt there is very little revenue being generated by hunting management. The few funds raised are not reinvested back into hunting management or nature conservation. Most revenue raised goes into general government funds and used for other purposes. For more information see the *Report on Hunting Management in Egypt with Recommendations for Potential Actions to Enhance its Management* (Baha El D ed 1996).

The status of revenue generating mechanisms from hunting management is as follows in Egypt:

Licensing Fees

At the moment there is little revenue generated from the issuing of hunting licenses in Egypt. The existing fees for licenses are too low and need to be raised. The EEAA presently collects no fees from the issuing of licenses, although it is the main body responsible for nature conservation in Egypt.

Trophy Fees

In Egypt no trophy fees are charged.

Other Fees

The existing fees charged for processing papers and other aspects of administering hunting and trade in wildlife are in most instances too low.

Fines

Fines for breaking the laws are too low to deter violators and are seldom applied and collected.

Hunting Reserves

Unlike in other countries, there are no government managed hunting reserves in Egypt. Except for Law 124/1983, there is no special category under Egyptian law called "managed hunting area". There are hunting lakes which are owned and operated by shooting clubs or private individuals. Private hunting lakes are mostly used for tourism hunting, but some are owned or rented by wealthy Egyptian sports hunters. Often the land or wetland is rented from governmental agencies or private individuals. While some of the lakes are permanent, most lakes such as those in El Fayoum are seasonal wetlands which consist of feral or agricultural land inundated just before and during the hunting season.

Once the club or individuals obtain a permit to operate a hunting lake, the management of the lake is largely at their discretion. It is a common practice to put out supplemental feed (bait) e.g. seeds at the lakes to attract waterbirds. Hunting usually takes place on certain days, with no hunting on the other days. Locals are employed to guard the sites or as Sharkaris who carry equipment and collect birds. Shooting Club members pay for a blind for a season either a full blind every week, LE10,000 or a half blind for every second week. (LE5000) (per. comm. Ali Hamdi).

As for the locations of the hunting lakes, most are close to Cairo:

- The Dokki Shooting Club has hunting lakes in Sharqiya and Kom Oshim in El Fayoum.
- The Remy military shooting club operates a hunting lake at Dashour.
- In El Fayoum Governorate there are a number of small private hunting lakes for tourism hunting.
- There are private lakes owned by Egyptian sports hunters in Sharqiya and Beni Suf Governorates.

There is no regular monitoring of hunting or law enforcement in the hunting reserves by the national authorities. There are some regulations, mostly pertaining to bird hunting for tourism as well as regulations by the shooting club for wetlands under their jurisdictions, but the means of implementation and status is unknown.

Hunting Management in the Protected Areas

To date, 24 have been declared around the country covering nearly 100,000 km² or 10% of the country's land surface. Many of Egypt's protected areas are important bottlenecks and wintering and breeding grounds for migrating birds. According to Law102/1992 all hunting in protected areas is prohibited except for scientific purposes and with permission from the responsible authorities.

Protected Areas are the only "hunting free zones" in Egypt and are the most effective management tool to date to control hunting. However, illegal hunting of migratory birds continues to occur in a number of protected areas (see Figure 8). Often hunting takes place with the knowledge or permission of the local authorities. In fact there has been repeated pressure from hunters, local authorities and others to allow hunting in the Protected Areas. For example, despite the EAAA's repeatedly attempts to stop hunting in the Zaranik Protected Area, the Governor of North Sinai has continued to allow it, including in the eastern part of the reserve which is the most important area for tourism.

Most of the protected areas are "paper parks". Despite their protected status, habitat degradation and wildlife harvesting continues in these areas in an uncontrolled manner. Many of the areas are large, remote and difficult to patrol. Except for Ras Mohammed and the other reserves in South Sinai, most Protected Areas in Egypt do not have enough qualified staff, equipment (especially vehicles), facilities and other resources to adequately monitor and protect wildlife under their jurisdictions. Furthermore, the need for police to accompany rangers to enforce the laws hinders law enforcement inside the Protected Areas.

Figure 9: Protected areas where hunting of migratory birds is known

Zaranik Protected Area (North Sinai Governorate)

Autumn bird hunting, falcon trapping

Lake Manzalla (Port Said Governorate)

Autumn bird hunting, waterbird hunting, sport hunting, pest control

Lake Burullus (Kafir El Sheikh Governorate)

Autumn bird hunting, waterbird hunting

El Ommayad (Marsa Matruh Governorate)

Autumn bird hunting

Lake Qarun (El Fayoum Governorate)

Sport hunting, hunting for tourism, falcon trapping

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Wadi El Rayan (El Fayoum Governorate)

Sport hunting, hunting for tourism, falcon trapping

Nile Islands (Governorates along the Nile e.g. Beni Suef)

Sport hunting, hunting for tourism

Red Sea Islands

Egg collection

Hunting Management at Other Areas of Importance for Nature

Excessive and indiscriminate hunting occurs at many locations in Egypt that have been designed under international conventions or listed as sites of importance for biodiversity. This includes Ramsar Sites, Specially Protected Areas (SPA) and IBAs. See Table 1 for a list of sites and the types of migratory bird hunting taking place. Except at Protected Areas, no special measures have been taken to manage or regulate hunting.

A total of 33 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been identified in Egypt by BirdLife International (Baha El Din 1999). The majority of these are important sites for migratory birds including bottlenecks, wetlands and islands. Unregulated hunting takes place at many of these areas, particularly the wetlands. Until now there is no formal monitoring of IBAs in Egypt and many areas are in need of conservation measures.

Table 1: Sites of international importance where there is hunting of migratory birds

SITE	GOVERNORATE	NATIOANL STATUS	INTERNA-TIONAL STATUS	MIGRANTS HUNTED
Lake Bardawil	North Sinai	Partly, Zaranik PA	Ramsar, IBA, SPA	All birds, particularly waterbirds, quail, songbirds, falcons
Lake Manzalla	Port Said, Beheira, Damietta	Partly, Ashtum el Gamil PA	IBA	All birds, particularly, waterbirds, quail, songbirds
Lake Burullus	Kafir El Sheikh	PA	Ramsar, IBA	All birds, particularly waterbirds, quail, songbirds, falcons
Lake Idku	Beheira		IBA	Waterbirds
Lake Maryut	Alexandria		IBA	Waterbirds
El Ommayad	Matruh	PA	SPA	All birds, particularly, quail, songbirds

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SITE		GOVERNORATE	NATIOANL STATUS	INTERNA-TIONAL STATUS	MIGRANTS HUNTED
Wadi El Natrun		Behira		IBA	Waterbirds
Lake Qarun		El Fayoum	PA	IBA	Waterbirds, falcons
Wadi El Rayan		El Fayoum	PA	IBA	Waterbirds, falcons
Upper Nile Valley		Aswan, Luxor, Qena	Partly, Islands PA	IBA	Waterbirds
Aswan Reservoir		Aswan		IBA	Waterbirds
Lake Nasser				IBA	All birds, particularly waterbirds

Research into Bird Migration and Hunting

There is considerable amount of information published about birds in Egypt with numerous studies about bird migration. However, there is still some major gaps in our knowledge regarding migration routes and numbers. Also, many of the studies are outdated and need updating, especially surveys of wintering waterbirds in Egyptian wetlands.

Only a handful of studies have been conducted about the hunting of migratory birds in Egypt. The main studies are listed in Figure 9. Most of the recent information was collected during more general studies. Few surveys have been carried out to monitor and assess the status of game populations. In fact little is known about the status of key game populations, the number of animals being harvested and the impacts of hunting on these species. The absence of up-to-date, reliable information has hampered decision making with regards to wildlife management, such as to devise species protection legislation and hunting regulations.

There is an urgent need to update our knowledge of the status of hunting in Egypt to help facilitate the development of a hunting management system. Individual studies are needed of the most common forms of migratory bird hunting, particularly autumn bird catching, waterbird hunting, falcon catching, tourism hunting and sport hunting.

Even if the resources were available, there is an absence of qualified technical personnel able to conduct such research. In addition, a data base is needed to store the information which should be regularly updated for monitoring purposes.

Figure 10: The Key Studies on Bird Hunting in Egypt

Autumn Bird Hunting

The Biodiversity Component of The Damietta Environmental Action Plan (Baha El Din 2004)

*Trapping and shooting of Corncrake *Crex crex* on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt* (Baha El Din et al 1996b)

*The Catching of Corncrake *Crex crex* and other birds in northern Egypt* (Baha El Din 1993)

The Catching of Birds in North Sinai (Baha El Din 1990)

Report on the Autumn Birdcatching in Egypt 1981. (Stouthamer R. and Bennett C. 1981)

Waterbird Hunting

Biodiversity Component of the Damietta Environmental Action Plan (2004)

Ornithological Studies in Egyptian Wetlands (Meininger and Atta 1994)

Waterbird Trapping and Hunting in Lake Manzalla Egypt, with an Outline of Its Economic Significance. (Mullie W.C. and Meininger 1983).

Bird of Prey Trapping

The Catching of Birds in North Sinai (Baha El Din 1990)

White Storks

Biodiversity Component of the Qena Governorate Environmental Action Plan (Baha El Din & Baha El Din 2001)

Ringling Records from Birds Hunted

There have been recoveries of rings from birds hunted in Egypt, but most of the records are old. These records are documented *A Preliminary List of Egyptian Bird Ringling Recoveries 1908-1988.* (Mullie W.C. et al 1989), the only report complying information on Egyptian ringling recoveries.

Only a few rings or the information from the rings of migratory birds hunted in Egypt is collected and sent to the countries inscribed on the rings. While Egypt recently started a bird ringling program with support of the South-East European Bird Migration Network (SEEM), except at the few localities, there is no formal collection of bird rings in Egypt. While the EEAA is the national authority listed on the rings, an official system still needs to be set-up for collecting, storing and decimating information from the bird rings.

Bird hunters and middle man are known to have vast numbers of bird rings in their possession. Important information is lost in most cases is such as the locations where the rings were collected or the dates. Still, these rings provide a wealth of information about the status and routes of migratory birds passing through Egypt.

Status of Public Awareness and Education

Low awareness is one of the key factors contributing to uncontrolled hunting. Hunters and desert communities tended to have more awareness about wildlife and appreciation of nature than other Egyptian communities, particularly urban dwellers. The majority of Egyptian nationals know little about migratory birds or the country's importance for bird migration. Likewise, there is little awareness about hunting and the problems associated with it.

There is little formal or non-formal conservation education in Egypt. Much is about nature and conservation in other countries and not pertinent to the Egyptian situation.

Nature and conservation is covered as topics in primary and secondary schools, but tends to be quite limited. Little information is known to be about migratory birds.

Few study ornithology or natural resource management at either the undergraduate and graduate levels at universities. Departments of Zoology (particularly with regards to higher vertebrates) and Wildlife Management tend to be weak in Egypt, having little expertise or interest in birds amongst the faculty. In addition, the libraries are poor and resources for fieldwork are scarce.

BirdLife International funded the establishment of an Education Centre at the Giza Zoo in the late 80's-early 90's which is no longer functioning. Special materials were produced and distributed for this programme including a bird migration wallchart and a children's bird book in Arabic. BirdLife international also produced other materials on migratory birds, including targeting hunting for various conservation projects in Egypt.

Some of the BirdLife materials are being sold in-country such as the *Important Bird Area Directory for Egypt* (Baha El Din 1999) along with several other books in English and Arabic about the birds of Egypt that have been instrumental in generating awareness (see the Bibliography).

While there is some coverage of nature in the media, it is relatively limited. Hunting and migratory birds has been addressed occasionally in the Egyptian print and broadcast media. Egypt has repeatedly received negative publicity in the international press for illegal hunting. BirdLife International in the early 90's produced a video about bird migration in English and Arabic, but it was not widely distributed in Egypt and it is not known if a copy was given to the Egyptian media to broadcast.

There are no special education programmes known for hunters. The *Hunter and Nature Magazine* which is produced in Arabic and English, tries to promote ethical and sustainable hunting and publishes articles to generate awareness about Egypt's natural heritage and the need to conserve it. The present status of this magazine and its distribution is unknown. Ali Hamdy

with funding from the Rotary Club produce a poster in Arabic and English showing the game and protected birds to educate hunters.

There were several campaigns conducted in Egypt targeting migratory bird conservation and problems with bird hunting:

Bird Hunting Tourism

Late 80's early 90's in response to uncontrolled bird hunting in El Fayoum a letter writing campaign was launched by local conservationists with the support from BirdLife International and its European partnership, with the Maltese Ornithological Society (MOS) at the forefront. Articles were also published in the media. Subsequently, all foreign tourism hunting was stopped for several years so that the hunting could be organized. Initially, there was a dramatic improvement in hunting management in El Fayoum, however, the situation began to deteriorate as companies and hunters found ways to circumvent the restrictions (see Section 3.5).

Save Our Storks

This campaign funded by the GTZ that aimed to encourage the conservation of migrating White Storks in South Sinai through promotion of conservation awareness. Stopping hunting of White Storks by itinerate workers living in Sharm El Sheikh was one of the targets of this campaign.

Corncrake

A public awareness campaign was conducted by BirdLife International with support from the RSBP that aimed to reduce Corncrake hunting in North Sinai and promote conservation of this globally threatened species. Education materials were especially produced for the campaign. These were distributed to hunters when researchers went around collecting data about bird hunting. The researchers also discussed with the hunters the need to protect the species. There was also coverage in the national and local media. While the campaign was highly successful at generating awareness of problem, it had little if any impact on curbing the hunting of this species or improving law enforcement.

Best Practice Models and Guidelines for Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation

"Wise use" or "best" hunting practices being developed and implemented elsewhere around the globe to encourage sustainable utilization of wildlife resources are virtually unknown in Egypt. Nearly all hunting practices can be considered as "unsustainable and "unwise use". There is little utilization of the vast wealth of experiences or lessons learned in hunting management from other countries.

No examples are known from Egypt of the following:

- Guidelines for Responsible Hunting
- Alternatives for the use of lead shot
- Best practice models for the management of hunting
- Research of management regimes for sustainable hunting

Alternatives to Migratory Bird Hunting

Resident Game Birds

There is only a few of Egyptian resident birds that can be considered as game species this includes Feral pigeon, Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, Sand Partridge *Ammoperdix heyi*, Chukar *Alectoris chukar* and sandgrouse. Palm Doves and Egyptian Goose are two resident species regularly hunted by Egyptian and foreign sports hunters. Palm Dove numbers are large enough to sustain hunting pressure. The authorities in Lake Nasser encourage the hunting of Egyptian Goose for tourism since they consider it a pest to agriculture. Egyptian Goose is a viable game species, but the numbers need to be limited. While a few sport hunters hunt desert birds, these are mostly hunted by local Bedouins. It is not advisable to open up the shooting of desert birds until studies can be conducted to determine if the populations can sustain such hunting.

Captive Breeding and Release Programmes

There are no breeding or release programmes for resident game birds and it is highly unlikely that the habitats, climate and other conditions in Egypt would lend themselves to such programmes.

The only known alternative to migratory bird hunting has been the farming of quail which are sold in restaurants and stores. While quail farming provides an alternative to wild caught birds, it has not reduced the amount of quail hunting in Egypt. Available throughout the year and lower in price, farmed quail is not as popular as wild caught birds as the former is a different species and the meat is not as tasty.

Birdwatching Tourism in Egypt

Efforts were made since the early 90's to develop birding tourism in Egypt. These were largely through the efforts of the author of the report. Birding tourism was promoted to Egypt through writing companies, publishing articles, news and papers, presenting lectures abroad at key events e.g. the British Birdwatching Fair and websites on the internet. Capacity in birding tourism was developed in Egypt in at least one local company (Traveline) through working with their staff. In addition, a handful of local bird guides were trained, including in El Fayoum, Luxor, Aswan and Abu Simbel.

At the peak in the mid 90's an estimated 500 tourists were coming annually to Egypt specifically for birdwatching including bird tours and private individuals. Foreign bird tour companies visiting Egypt included Sunbird, Birdquest, Ornitholodays and Traveling Naturalist. Birdwatchers mainly come from Europe and the United States. Birders stay in Egypt on average from ten days to two weeks. Most travel all over the country and combine birdwatching with sightseeing e.g. antiquities. The most popular locations for birding tourism are: Cairo and vicinity, South Sinai, Red Sea and Upper Egypt including Luxor, Aswan and Abu Simbel. It was believed these tours which cost more than the average package tour to Egypt, generated more than a million pounds for the country annually.

Terrorism against foreign tourists led to dramatic declines in the numbers of tourists. Birding tours were likewise affected and companies had problems selling their tours. The numbers of tourists increased on and off again, but has remained fairly low with several hundred birdwatchers visiting the country per year. There are no official figures or tourism surveys, but it is thought that thousands to tens of thousands of other tourists enjoy seeing birds as part of their "tourism experience" while in Egypt and many more would engage in birdwatching if offered as an activity.

While there has been growing interest in birding tourism in Egypt by both the public and private sectors, only a few companies have been successful in promoting and organizing tours given limited knowledge of and capacity in this specialty tourism market. Most companies and individuals involved are working in tourism in general and cater to package tourism. There is little in the way of ecotourism¹¹ to Egypt and little involves birds.

The need for more experienced birdwatching guides is among the chief limiting factors to birding tourism development. There are few Egyptian nationals who are birdwatchers and can help develop, promote, organize and guide birdwatching tours. Only one local guide is known to rely solely on birdwatching tourism for employment.

One of the key challenges facing the tourism industry is how to protect the resources that attract the tourists. Important habitats for birding tourism are being degraded at an accelerated rate and bird species attractive for tourists are becoming increasingly difficult to observe, including migrants. One of the conflicts of interest has been the fact that tourism hunting takes place in important areas for birding tourism.

Projects related to Hunting Management and Migratory Bird Conservation

There have been numerous nature conservation projects in Egypt since the late 90's. Few projects dealt specifically with migratory bird conservation and hunting management. Most migratory bird conservation projects were

¹¹ According to international criteria.

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initiated by BirdLife International. Projects dealing with hunting management were mostly either research, studies, training or awareness raising. The vast majority of projects were related to Protected Area establishment or environmental management. Migratory birds and hunting were small components of these larger projects.

The majority of projects were financed by bi-lateral and unilateral donors and implemented in cooperation with the government. Although international NGOs were sometimes involved, few were undertaken in cooperation with local societies. Several individuals conducted their own private projects, such as the author and Ali Hamdi.

Table 2: Projects having Activities Covering Hunting of Migratory Birds

PROJECT	STATUS	IMPLEMENTING BODIES	FOCUS
Capacity Self-Assessment in Biodiversity	On-going	UNEP-EEAA	Studies addressing Wildlife Conservation and Hunting Management
Capacity Self-Assessment in Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification	On-going	UNDP-EEAA & Ministry of Agriculture	Study of Biodiversity Conservation
CITES Training	2000?	Darwin Initiative – Ministry of Agriculture	Wildlife Trade
Medcoast	On-going	GEF-UNDP-EEAA	Wetland conservation (Burullus, Zaranik, El Ommayad)
Wadi El Rayan PA Development	On-going about 5 years	Italians – IUCN - EEAA	PA management
Soaring Bird Conservation Project	In-preparation	GEF- UNDP BirdLife-	Migratory Bird Conservation
St Katherine PA Development	About 7 years ending 2002	EU - EEAA	PA Management
South Sinai PA Development	About 10 years Ending 2002	EU - EEAA	PA Management
BioMap	On-going	UND-Italians-IUCN-EEAA	Biodiversity Data Management
Institutional Support Programme to the	On-going	UNDP-Italians-IUCN-EEAA	Capacity Building (might include

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PROJECT	STATUS	IMPLEMENTING BODIES	FOCUS
NCS			hunting management)
Red Sea and Wadi El Gamal PA Development	On-gong	USAID-EEAA	PA Management
Institutional Support Programme EEAA	Ended 90's	Danida-EEAA	Funded Hunting Management Study
SEEM Environmental Action Plan Qena	Finished 2004	DIFD-EEAA	Biodiversity Study including hunting
SEEM Environmental Action Plan Damietta	Finished 2004	DIFD-EEAA	Biodiversity Study Including hunting
Species Action Planning for Houbara and Lappet-faced Vulture	Finished 2004	BirdLife International Darwin	Species Conservation

Capacity Needs

The need to establish a comprehensive national hunting management system has been identified repeatedly as a national priority in national policies and strategies, country reports to international conventions and numerous government studies. To initiate the process, it is proposed that an action plan and strategy be produced which outlines the needs and requirements of a national system to manage all forms of wildlife utilization in a sustainable and conservationally sound manner in compliance with Egypt's international commitments. Based on this report, the proposed framework should be developed and implemented in cooperation with concerned stakeholders.

The conservation and hunting of migratory birds should be a central focus of hunting management efforts in Egypt. The highest priority should be given to: autumn bird catching, waterbird hunting, falcon trapping, tourism hunting, the wildlife trade and sport hunting. While efforts should be made to build capacity of the Ministries at the national level, there should be parallel efforts to build capacity at the local and grassroots level. Governorates with the highest priority where action is needed to regulate migratory bird hunting and trade are as follows: North Sinai, Port Said, Damietta, Kafir el Sheikh, Beheira, Alexandria, Matruh, Sharqiya, Cairo, Giza, El Fayoum, Beni Suef and Aswan. Community development programmes should be developed as vehicles to provide financial incentives to hunters and traders to stop destructive practices, while education and other programmes targeting children are needed to change the attitudes of future generations to reduce hunting.

A hunting management capacity building programmes be comprised of the following:.

- Clearly identify the role of the organizations to be involved in hunting management and establish cooperation mechanisms and other means to implement the system
- Build the capacity of the implementing bodies e.g. trained manpower, equipment.
- Revise the existing hunting legislation or draft new legislation to establish a legal basis to manage and regulate hunting.
- Establish a national data base to collect information relevant to hunting and the systems implementation
- Establish regulations and guidelines for hunting to be reviewed on a regular basis e.g. species lists, hunting seasons, bag limits, methods of hunting, hunting reserves, etc
- Set-up a system of licenses for sport guns and ammunition, hunting and trapping, wildlife trade, hunting reserves and collections.
- Establish systems for monitoring hunting and trapping, wildlife trade, hunting reserves and collections and insure compliance of the regulations;
- Build capacity in particular in law enforcement agencies to enforce the laws and prosecute violators.
- Develop a protocol for the care, treatment and release of migrant birds after confiscation.
- Devise self-financing mechanisms to finance the system's implementation
- Develop the necessary research programmes required for decision making.
- Develop programmes to build capacity and generate awareness to facilitate implementation of the system, such as training manuals, hand books, etc..

A number of additional actions are needed to enhance hunting management and migratory bird conservation in Egypt, including:

- Conduct an economic analysis of migratory bird hunting and alternative forms of use as a decision making and awareness raising tool.

- Promote conservation within the sport hunting community and encourage hunters to take an active role in hunting management.
- Develop best practices and code of ethics for hunting in Egypt.
- Study the present status of hunting reserves in Egypt and propose other options and means to enhance hunting management.
- Study the use of air rifles in Egypt and propose legislation, regulations or other programs to restrict their use.
- Conduct research on migratory species and hunting issues of special concern.
- Collect bird rings from hunters and store, disseminate and analyze the information.
- Enhance conservation in the existing Protected Areas strengthening management of these areas as “hunting free zones” and establish new protected areas for the conservation for globally important migratory bird populations as needed.
- Build capacity in a rehabilitation facility in Egypt to treat and release injured and confiscated migratory birds, particularly birds of prey. .
- Develop birdwatching and ecotourism as an alternative to hunting to generate sustainable live hoods for local community.
- Conduct other sustainable livelihood projects for poor, marginalized communities engaging in bird hunting to reduce or stop this practice, for example, income producing activities, such as raising chickens, quail farming and handicraft production.
- Build capacity of local NGOs in hunting management and migratory bird conservation and provide them with training and resources to make them more effective partners for conservation.
- Build capacity at the universities in wildlife management particularly in relation to migratory birds and hunting management through providing books to libraries, supporting PhDs and research, teaching exchanges, etc...
- Develop awareness raising programmes and materials about migratory birds targeting hunters, school children, decision makers and the general public.
- Develop programmes i.e. extra circular actives for school age children during autumn bird migration that would help to reduce the numbers engaged in hunting.

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